

# The Daybook

Vol. 9 Issue 1

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### About The Daybook and the Museum

*The Daybook* is an authorized publication of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum (HRNM). Its contents do not necessarily reflect the official view of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, the U.S. Navy, or the U.S. Marine Corps and do not imply endorsement thereof. Book reviews are solely the opinion of the reviewer.

The HRNM is operated and funded by Commander, Navy Region, Mid-Atlantic. The museum is dedicated to the study of 225 years of naval history in the Hampton Roads region. It is also responsible for the historic interpretation of the battleship *Wisconsin*.

The museum is open daily. Call for information on *Wisconsin's* hours of operations. Admission to the museum and *Wisconsin* are free. *The Daybook's* purpose is to educate and inform readers on historical topics and museum related events. It is written by the staff and volunteers of the museum.

Questions or comments can be directed to the Hampton Roads Naval Museum editor. *The Daybook* can be reached at 757-322-2993, by fax at 757-445-1867, e-mail at [gbcalthoun@nsn.cmar.navy.mil](mailto:gbcalthoun@nsn.cmar.navy.mil), or write *The Daybook*, Hampton Roads Naval Museum, One Waterside Drive, Suite 248, Norfolk, VA 23510-1607. The museum can be found on the World Wide Web at <http://www.hrnm.navy.mil>.

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Even With New Documents, the USS *Liberty* Incident Is Far From Settled

**Cover Illustrations:** On the cover is a map produced for the Taylor Commission, which was a group established to investigate the 1960 disaster at the Bay of Pigs. In an attempt to overthrow the regime of Fidel Castro, the Kennedy Administration authorized the CIA to train a brigade of anti-Castro Cubans to spark a revolt. The CIA called upon several local Naval units including Little Creek Amphibious Base and the Norfolk-based Task Force Alpha to participate in this most secret of operations.

# Lazy Days of Summer?

## The Director's Column

by Becky Poulliot

Summer is upon us once again, and with it we are welcoming fleets of visitors from all over the country to the museum gallery and onboard our beloved *Wisky*. Summer has always been a time for family vacations, and this year we hope to capture these families with an array of new offerings. Most notably, we now offer demonstrations in the gallery and a new day camp program for children, appropriately dubbed ComNavKIDLant.

Beginning in May, our museum education department began presenting advertised programs every weekday from 11:00 a.m. through 3:00 p.m. The programs focus on the harsh life of the sailor during the Age of Sail, Naval activity in the Civil War as it erupted around Hampton Roads, and some hands-on skills like knot tying and signaling - the specialties of seamen around the world. Our gallery volunteers are often the programs' stars, taking on the persona and appearance appropriate for each time period, and, as always, exceptionally presenting the best of Naval history.

Great numbers of visitors from all over the country have taken part in these new gallery programs. In some instances, the Wardroom and Civil War areas of the museum have been overflowing with guests eager to learn more about the U.S. Navy's history and heritage in Hampton Roads. The true mark of our success in this most recent endeavor is that all who witness these

programs offer nothing less than favorable comments upon leaving. Special thanks also to educators Bob Matteson and OS1 (SW/AW) Gary Brown for manning new programs in the Wardroom.

The new ComNavKIDLant day camp program has also been a great success with groups visiting the museum nearly every day and receiving a fantastic experience in Naval history. ComNavKIDLant is a collection of all the museum's educational offerings, including activities from the "Life at Sea" and the "Hunter Hunted and Homefront" programs. The camp includes a guided tour of the battleship and a lesson in both the complexity and importance of underwater archaeology. For more on ComNavKIDLant, **see the feature article on page 3.**

In addition to welcoming new programs, we are most pleased to announce the addition of a new member of our volunteer staff. Lauren Kirchner, an art student at Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville, is completing an internship with the museum this summer. While at the museum, Lauren has been working on a children's activity guide for the battleship as well as taking photographs of *Wisky* for a new brochure that will enrich the battleship tour for our visitors with disabilities. Lauren has also assisted our education staff on a daily basis through welcoming groups and providing general support. After her formal



*Intern Lauren Kirchner is working on producing an activity book and photography projects for the museum this summer. (Photo by LI2 Darell Medina)*

studies, Lauren hopes to one day teach art on the collegiate level, perhaps sell her own work and open an art gallery. Lauren has been a precious addition to our staff and we wish her success in chasing all her goals.

This summer we are experiencing high levels of attendance. In fact, USS *Wisconsin* will soon welcome her one-millionth visitor since her April 2001 grand opening. We serve our military community through offering free ceremony services on board the ship and in the gallery. So far in 2003, we have hosted more than 250 ceremonies for our active duty and reserve military community. We are one of Hampton Roads' top draws.

It's great to be busy!

*Becky*

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Want to receive the latest HRNM news online? Just send us an e-mail to [hrnm@nsn.cmar.navy.mil](mailto:hrnm@nsn.cmar.navy.mil) to receive up-to-the minute news on the museum's happenings!

# Introducing COMNAVKIDLANT

The Museum Commissions a New Summer Program Kids

**T**hough Battleship *Wisconsin* is no stranger to large groups of small children in the summer, the education team is pleased to announce an official summer field trip offering.

The new program, called Commander, Navy Kids, Atlantic (ComNavKIDLant for short), is designed for children ages 4 through 7 and is commonly paired with the existing "Life at Sea" educational program that takes place in the museum gallery.

ComNavKIDLant, an imaginary Navy command directed by children, includes a guided tour of *Wisconsin* with supplemental



*Knot-tying is one of many activities in the museum's new summer program "COMNAVKIDLANT." Call 757-322-3108 for more information. (Photo by Lauren Kirchner)*




activities along the way. On the bow, children learn to tie a variety of knots and discover their uses in the Navy. Then they learn about the service ribbons the battleship has earned and participate in a ribbon-coloring exercise in JJ's room, the new education space located on the port side of *Wisconsin*. On the fantail, kids stage a helicopter landing by way of a beanbag toss on the helicopter pad. Several groups have

participated in this program thus far, and have given ComNavKIDLant rave reviews.

The museum offers summer camps an a-la-carte menu of activities from which to choose. "Life at Sea," a program depicting life aboard a tall ship during the Age of Sail, is appropriate for young patrons ages 4-10. A variety of programs are available for older children including "Blacks in Blue: The History of African-Americans in the Navy," "Up Periscope: Pacific Attack Submarines of World War II," and Underwater Archaeology: The Undersea Artifacts of

USS *Cumberland* and CSS *Florida*." Age-appropriate, hands-on guided tours of Battleship *Wisconsin* are also always available to students.

All of the new programming is free, though reservations are required. As is the case with *Wisconsin*'s daily operations, none of the programs would exist without the help of our dedicated volunteers. If you are interested in working with children and would like to become a volunteer, please contact the volunteer coordinator, Tom Dandes, at 322-3106. 

## Wisconsin Visitor Information

### General Information

757-322-2987

[www.hrnnavy.mil](http://www.hrnnavy.mil)

### Volunteer Opportunities

757-322-3106

[tdandes@nsn.cmar.navy.mil](mailto:tdandes@nsn.cmar.navy.mil)

### Honor and Ceremonies

757-322-2988

[lrobinson@nsn.cmar.navy.mil](mailto:lrobinson@nsn.cmar.navy.mil)

### Historical Information

757-322-2993 or 322-2984

[gbcalthoun@nsn.cmar.navy.mil](mailto:gbcalthoun@nsn.cmar.navy.mil)

### Nauticus' Wisconsin Exhibits

757-664-1000

[www.nauticus.org](http://www.nauticus.org)

[jenny.burge@norfolk.gov](mailto:jenny.burge@norfolk.gov)

### Wisconsin Project Partners

Hampton Roads Naval Historical Foundation

[www.hrnnavy.mil/hrnhf](http://www.hrnnavy.mil/hrnhf)

USS *Wisconsin* Association

[www.usswisconsin.org](http://www.usswisconsin.org)

Battleship *Wisconsin* Foundation

[www.battleshipwisconsin.org](http://www.battleshipwisconsin.org)





# Museum Acquires Letters from S.P. Lee and the Steam Frigate *Minnesota*

by Joe Judge

On a spring day in 1863 a sailor was thinking about boots. James Walsh, USN, was on board the steam-sail frigate USS *Minnesota* when he wrote to his sister on May 2: “send me A pair of fine boots No. 6 and some stockings send them in as small A box as possible I send you twenty dollars enclosed.” The importance of good footwear and a small glimpse into the life of a Civil War sailor on blockade duty in Hampton Roads, this window on the past comes from one of several letters recently acquired by the Hampton Roads Naval Museum. As a group they offer an interesting picture of the concerns of the blockading fleet, from the quarterdeck to below decks.

Two of the letters are from a well-known flag officer, Rear Admiral Samuel Phillips Lee. Four are from an obscure sailor from Boston, James Walsh. Four of them date from the year 1862, while two carry the dateline 1863.

The first letter from Admiral Lee was written only a week after he assumed command of the Squadron, and it is written to his predecessor, Captain Louis M. Goldsborough. The two men had been corresponding and in this letter Admiral Lee gives his view of the war: “I read with much interest what you so strikingly write of the public situation. I hope for the best. It does appear to me that the position of the enemy in a military point of view is favorable to us; & that if our leaders & their troops do their duty the best results will follow.” Lee’s critics often accused him of lack of aggression, and something of a sanguine personality comes through in this comment.

Lee was a well-connected Virginian with a long Navy career. He was related to Robert E. Lee but did not join his cousin in turning his back on the Union. It may be that his ties to the Navy were simply too deep, for he had been at sea on and off since 1825 when he was appointed a Midshipman. Lee led the Atlantic Blockading Squadron for over two years, when the waters of Virginia and North Carolina were areas of active combat. By 1864, General U.S. Grant was preparing for

an attack on the Confederate bastion of Fort Fisher. Grant, and Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, wanted someone other than S.P. Lee in command of the Squadron, and Lee was relieved in October.

We first hear of the sailor James Walsh in May of 1862, when the Hampton Roads area and his new ship the *Minnesota* had already become famous throughout the world after the March 8 and 9 Battle of Hampton Roads. This time was a period when both sides were preparing for the next stage of the naval war. All Walsh’s letters in this collection are addressed to his sister, and in this first one he sums up the strategic fact of the early Spring: “when I got here the Merrimack was expected out.” (Like many people of the time and since, Walsh refers to the Confederate ironclad CSS *Virginia* as the *Merrimack*).

James Walsh does not mention it, but he arrived around the same time as another visitor, President Lincoln. Lincoln also arrived in Hampton Roads early in May to see for himself what his troublesome General George McClellan was doing. McClellan considered Norfolk a minor problem that would resolve itself when Richmond surrendered. This oversight surprised Lincoln, and he took decisive action by ordering a flotilla of gunboats, including *Monitor*, to approach Sewells Point, the Confederate battery sitting opposite the harbor from Fort Monroe. Walsh witnessed the battle: “the Ships here had a fight with Sewalls point and the other Southern Batteries.”

After the fall of Norfolk, the Union did not succeed in capturing the *Virginia* – on May 11 she was burned and scuttled by her own crew. Walsh also witnessed this event: “the Merrimack was Blown up on Sunday morning at 5 oclock it was seen from the ship.”

On May 30<sup>th</sup> James Walsh again wrote his sister from the *Minnesota*, with the additional date line “Norfolk City Va.” At this point the ship had ascended the Elizabeth River and was close to the city.



Walsh writes, “When I go on shore I will try to get some Secession trophies every thing is beautiful and is in Blossom here Cherries and Strawberrys in plenty We lay very close to the city and are in sight of many Beautiful Buildings.”

Walsh also comments on the condition of his ship following the Spring battles “the



The museum acquired this 19th century copy of a well known photo of Admiral Samuel Phillips Lee, commander of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron and cousin of General Robert E. Lee, as a part of larger collection of Civil War letters.

old Ship has got 8 or 10 Shot in her I do not think she can stay long without coming north for Repairs.” He also commented on the ship’s status as the flagship of the Blockading Squadron: “I like first rate this

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being the flag ship under Commodore Goldsborough. I have been trying every day to send half pay but the purser says this ship is going out of commission. If they send us anywhere I will leave it." Commodore Goldsborough was Louis M. Goldsborough, USN, commander of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron. Both Walsh and the purser were wrong about the fate of the *Minnesota*: it was not decommissioned and remained in Hampton Roads for several more years, not going north until 1865.

Walsh's third letter from 1862 is dated July 1<sup>st</sup> from "Norfolk, Va." In this letter Walsh gives more details about the conditions in the city and work on the Gosport Yard, back in Federal hands: "We have destroyed all the Rebel Works about here and took the guns to the Navy

Boats Selling fruit and pastry. We have fresh provisions 4 times a week."

Walsh was not only eating well, he had access to specialty items like stationery. Two of the letters (those of 30 May 1862 and May 1863) are fine examples of Civil War stationery. The May 30, 1862 letter bears a blue imprint showing a broadside view of the *Minnesota* at anchor, above the legend "MINNESOTA." (see image below) The 1863 letter carries a black and white American eagle with a banner in its beak reading "U.S. FLAG SHIP MINNESOTA."


At this point in time *Minnesota*, and presumably James Walsh, settled into a life of routine, enforcing the blockade in Hampton Roads. Union Admiral David Dixon Porter likened blockading duty to "a parcel of cats watching a big rat hole." Sailor Walsh's next letter is dated May 2,

the resulting actions in the month of April resulted in the loss of several small vessels and a large number of casualties. Walsh described the contest to his sister: "I wrote you last on the Nansemond River ... they was fighting last night and the night before and I might as well say for the last two weeks night and day but I don't think that the rebels will cross unless they blow up the boats and they can't do that."

The second Lee letter, also written in early 1863, refers to this strategic situation. The letter was sent to Captain John W. Livingston, Union commander of the Gosport Navy Yard. Livingston must have expressed some concern about the Confederate efforts, for Lee advised him "Genl. Dix seemed quite easy this morning about Norfolk." Dix, commander of the 7<sup>th</sup> Army Corps, was countering the Confederate movements. Lee offers further, if somewhat patronizing, reassurance to Livingston by referring to General Egbert Viele, the military governor of Norfolk. "Genl. Viele ought to be able to give you timely notice of their approach. All you want is timely notice to prevent personal surprise to you."

At the end of the letter Lee adds a funny, if rather sardonic, comment, which illuminates his view of the military alarms: "P.S. It is not uncommon for Generals to make use of a case of alarm in order to get more troops."

What was the fate of these two correspondents? After the war, Admiral Lee had extensive service in the Washington, D.C. area, where he retired in 1873. Along with the letters, the museum acquired a photograph of Admiral Lee with his grandson in Washington D.C., which dates from the latter period of his career. The admiral lived until the advanced age of eighty-five, passing away in 1897.

There is little information about James Walsh, who, after these letters, passes out of history like a shadow dims at night. In 1864 Confederates attacked the U.S. gunboat *Shawsheen*, which ran aground in the James River near Turkey Bend. The Southerners captured several members of the crew. These unfortunates were taken to Libby Prison in Richmond. A list of the naval prisoners of war compiled on May 8, 1864 includes one "James Walsh, coal heaver." However, it is impossible to know if this James Walsh is the same man who ordered new boots two years previously. 



Yard...". Norfolk in July was far from the naval action occurring up the James River, and as a result, writes Walsh "I have first rate times here." Walsh apparently had his good times only with approved liberty, as he writes, "some of the men go on without liberty but they have to pay Dearly as it costs 10 dollars and a week in double irons."

Creature comforts were not far from Walsh's mind, either, as he described the actions of Norfolk's African Americans selling provisions to the Navy: "the colored individuals is [*sic.*] here every meal with pies cakes ice creams and so forth." This echoed a comment from the May 30<sup>th</sup> letter: "the Ship is completely surrounded by

1863 about a year later than the previous three. At this time the excitement of the Peninsula Campaign and the capture of Norfolk had receded into yesterday's news. Walsh writes "I have not been ashore yet and there is not much use in going for the soldiers have all left here and gone where they can do some fighting for their country there has been some hard fighting."

Walsh was referring to the Confederate campaign headed by General James Longstreet in the Spring of 1863. Longstreet was eager to take hold of the large amount of supplies in southeastern Virginia and northeastern North Carolina, and he moved his forces toward Suffolk. The Navy was called on for support, and

# Task Force Alpha in the Bay of Pigs

Local Navy units are mobilized  
for a secret mission to overthrow Castro

by Gordon Calhoun

Ever since Fidel Castro overthrew the Batista regime in 1959, elements within the Eisenhower Administration had grown concerned of a Communist government so close to American shores. Many intelligence reports indicated that time was not on America's side as Castro quickly consolidated power by stamping out non-Communist elements of the revolution. Ships carrying Soviet and Eastern European military equipment were arriving daily. In a bold and somewhat desperate attempt to remove the Communist leader from power, the Central Intelligence Agency planned and authorized an invasion by a brigade of anti-Castro Cubans. The hope was that the population would rise up against Castro upon the arrival of the brigade.

In order to execute this operation, the CIA called upon several local Naval ships and personnel to assist, often with great secrecy. Though many of the officers and sailors did not know it, Hampton Roads became an active participant in one of the most pivotal of events in the great struggle



*The Norfolk-based Task Force Alpha attempted to improve the Navy's skills in hunting new Soviet submarines by conducting regular squadron-level ASW exercises. In the Spring of 1960, it was assigned to support the CIA's Operation Zapata (also called Operation Pluto). (HRNM photo)*

Little Creek Amphibious Base. He was on a carrier off the coast of North Carolina when he received an order to debark and head immediately to Washington, D.C. He was not told why, just that it was urgent and his presence was needed. Next thing he knew, he was meeting with the Chief of Naval Operations, the immortal Admiral Arleigh Burke. The CNO informed him that he had been chosen by a computer to help plan a top-secret operation directed by the CIA.

"It was voluntary," Scapa said in a recent interview. "I could have said no as my next scheduled assignment was to be Naval attaché to the American embassy in Ecuador." But the former gunnery officer of USS *Wisconsin* accepted the assignment with great enthusiasm. Before he could say "yes," Deputy Director of the CIA Richard Bissell wanted to speak to him personally. Bissell bluntly told Scapa that if he accepted this assignment, Scapa would have to cut most of his personal contacts and would

report only to Admiral Burke and a few select people within the CIA. Undeterred, Scapa accepted. "I thought the whole idea was quite exciting," he remembered.

While it was obvious that an amphibious assault was in order, as Cuba is an island, it was not clear to many in the Agency how to go about organizing it. Amphibious assaults are among the most complicated type of military operation and require months of planning small details. The CIA had its own air contingent, but it had little to no experience in maritime matters, and this was one of the primary reasons Scapa was asked to join the staff.

Agents did begin the groundwork on the equipment side of the operation by looking at several broken down freighters and infantry landing craft (LCI) to ship supplies and men in, but they soon discovered that combat vessels were required as well. They eventually asked for the Navy's assistance. Admiral Robert

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*Fidel Castro established a government declared hostile to U.S. interests in Cuba in 1959. Almost immediately, plans were made by the Central Intelligence Agency to remove him from power. (Library of Congress)*

between the United States and its Communist opponents.

One local connection was Captain Jacob "Jack" Scapa. Scapa served as the assistant chief of Plans and Operations at the Amphibious Command Atlantic (PHIBLANT), which was headquartered at



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Dennison, Commander-in-Chief of the Atlantic Fleet, recalled (during an oral history conducted by the Naval Institute) getting a phone call from one of his deputies. The commander of PHIBLANT had just received a visit at his Little Creek Amphibious Base office from two CIA agents. The Agency was in need of a large amphibious assault ship and wondered if the Navy would be willing to give up one. When the commander asked what it was for, the men refused to provide details and only stated that the President himself had personally endorsed the request. Upon hearing this, Dennison was livid. He called up the Joint Chiefs of Staff and remembered screaming, "I am not going to give my ship over to a couple of characters who say they are from the CIA or any place else!"

The Joint Chiefs eventually let Dennison in on some of the details and instructed him to support the Agency. Bissell himself came to Norfolk to personally brief the Atlantic Fleet chief and succeeded in pacifying him enough to provide the needed resources.

Among the first combat ships to be acquired were the LCIs docked at Little Creek. These small ships are familiar to anyone who has seen photographs of the Normandy landings or assaults in the Pacific during World War II. Agents arrived at Little Creek in early 1960 to see what the Navy was willing to turn over.

The Navy did not let go of any craft gratis, but sold three of the vessels for \$125,000 each to the Agency. The CIA's inspector general would later state that the ships were "supposedly in operating condition" and were in "such bad shape that they could hardly be moved from the dock." As a result, Agency personnel spent much of the winter fixing up the craft to seaworthy condition. Little time was left to train contract personnel on how to actually operate the ships. It was later discovered that the contract personnel hired by the Agency did not actually know how to operate the landing craft and some of the captains did not know basic navigation. Nonetheless, the 12-man team somehow, despite a lack of basic sailing skills, safely steamed the ships from Hampton Roads to Puerto Rico.

The main vessel requisitioned was the Little Creek-based USS *San Marcos*

(LSD-25), a large landing dock ship built in 1944. Ships like *San Marcos* served as a "mother ship" to smaller landing craft and she was scheduled to be in Vieques, Puerto Rico for exercises. Her participation in exercises was called off and she was ordered to make port. Once in port, smaller utility landing craft (LCUs) loaded with M-41 light tanks, trucks, machine-guns, and ammunition were placed on board the assault



*CINCLANTFLT got a phone call one day from his subordinate at PHIBLANT stating that two CIA agents wanted to "requisition" an amphibious assault ship for an undisclosed operation. Though he voiced major objections, the Joint Chiefs instructed Dennison to release the Little Creek-based USS San Marcos (LSD-25), a large World War II-vintage dock landing ship, for the Agency's project. (Photo provided by navsource.org)*

ship.

While the equipment was being acquired, planning an actual landing was now in advance stages. The Agency had been busy recruiting and training several hundred Cuban exiles, mostly from Florida, for many months.

As for the attack itself, as originally drawn up by the CIA and reviewed by the Joint Chiefs, the plan called for the freighter/landing craft squadron to pick up the Cuban Expeditionary Force or CEF (the official name for the anti-Castro force) from its Central American training bases, rendezvous with *San Marcos*, and then launch an assault with U.S. Naval air cover on the town of Trinidad, located in southeast Cuba just east of Santiago. To ensure secrecy, the freighters were to sail individually from Central America to Cuba and not in formation.

The Agency, however, felt that the freighters needed escorts to ensure a safe arrival. Dennison offered up a group of destroyers and a carrier known as Task Force Alpha. The Navy formed the squadron in the late 1950s to be the premier anti-

submarine (ASW) squadron in the fleet. The squadron consisted of seven destroyers and destroyer escorts, an anti-submarine aircraft carrier, ASW planes such as P-2 Neptunes, and at least two submarines. Based at Naval Station Norfolk, the squadron was supposed to get the best of everything in ASW technology. In the words of Admiral Burke, "If they want beefsteak for dinner, give them beefsteak."

While they did not necessarily get beefsteak, the squadron did receive the most modern sonar and became quite proficient in tracking down Soviet submarines.

Dennison noticed that the task force was scheduled to conduct routine ASW exercises off the coast of Rhode Island in early April 1960, which was about when the Agency wanted to launch the operation. He secretly switched the task force's orders to the Caribbean and ordered them to conduct their exercises in the tropics.

The target and style of the attack was also switched. President John F. Kennedy and others within his administration became concerned that the plan to seize Trinidad was too much like a World War II-style amphibious assault operation. He wanted a quieter landing that allowed the United States to have plausible deniability of its involvement. He asked the Agency and the Joint Chiefs to come up with alternative locations that would be more discrete. Additionally, no Americans were to be directly involved in the attack, meaning that the previously planned air strikes by

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American carriers had been called off.

The air strike issue was the subject of many heated debates between the State Department and the military planners. In order for the operation to succeed, military planners believed that Castro's air and naval units had to be removed before the landing took place. The State Department in particular adamantly believed that the operation had to look like it originated from



*Captain Jack Scapa was off the coast of North Carolina when he was called back to Norfolk and then to Washington to help the CIA with the detailed work of amphibious operations. Much of his advice and planning for the operation was scrapped when the White House implemented political constraints and changed the landing point. (Photo provided by Captain Jack Scapa)*

within the Cuban community and that any strike from an aircraft carrier would be too "spectacular" and would obviously look like an American-controlled invasion. The CIA, State Department, and military planners reached a rather complicated compromise on this issue whereby B-26 bombers flown by CEF and contract CIA pilots would make it look like bombers defected from Castro's air force. Meanwhile, American surface forces be standing by ready to assist if the President changed his mind.

As for locations, one alternative was Bahía de Cochinos, or the Bay of Pigs, located about twenty miles west of Cienfuegos in south central Cuba. It was thought that if the CEF landed here, the landing would go unnoticed long enough for the brigade to establish a permanent beachhead. This was, somewhat ironically, the same location where Castro himself first landed and started the Communist takeover of the island. With the location of the invasion changed, the Agency changed the

name of the operation from Operation Trinidad to Operation Zapata. The Agency would later change the name a second time, officially settling on Operation Pluto.

Scapa remembered that this was when he started to voice his own concern about the success of the operation. "We had the airstrikes planned out. I questioned the change in port of embarkation [to the Bay of Pigs], two to three weeks before the

the captain left the ship."

When Beale's CO returned, he ordered several changes to the normal routine. Only one logbook was to be kept. Normally several logs books throughout the ship were kept to maintain records on navigation and communication traffic. No encoded message traffic was to be recorded. Instead, the operations department decoded the message, gave it to the CO directly, and

*"I questioned the change in port of embarkation [to the Bay of Pigs], two to three weeks before the operation. Trinidad was mapped out. The key was if anything went wrong there was an escape route."*

-Captain Jack Scapa, Navy liaison to the CIA for the Bay of Pigs Operation

operation. Trinidad and its harbor were mapped out. The key was if anything went wrong there was an escape route," he said. Specifically, there were mountains to the north of Trinidad where the CEF soldiers could escape and continue the fight.

Despite objections from people like Scapa, Kennedy's Secretary of State Dean Rusk, and U.S. Senator William Fulbright of Arkansas, the plan went forward.

Task Force Alpha itself left for its alleged exercises on April 5. Some of the destroyer crews thought something was out of place immediately after leaving Hampton Roads as they noticed that group's carrier, USS *Essex* (CVS-9), was empty of aircraft. Unknown to most, a CIA agent was on board and the carrier had been pre-loaded with ordnance for ground strikes.

The task force turned south once it made open waters. "I knew something was up the moment we turned south," said Ben Benzel, a retired chief radarman assigned to the USS *Beale* (DDE-471) at the time. Benzel and his shipmates really began to wonder what was going on when their commanding officer and the other destroyer COs were called over to *Essex* while underway. "I have never been to sea when

threw it in the burn bag.

Events became even more mysterious when the order went out that the ship's hull



*As chief of the Atlantic Fleet, it was up to Admiral Robert Dennison to interpret the often confusing instructions from Washington and turn them into workable orders for Task Force Alpha. Dennison would later be responsible for organizing the successful naval quarantine of Cuba during the Cuban Missile Crisis. (Photo provided by NATO)*

number was to be painted over and the National Ensign was to be burned with the tattered remains then reflown. Sailors were

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*Bay of Pigs continued from page 8*

told if they had civilian clothes on board, they were to wear them. “We were supposed to be a Central American ship,” Benzel remembered.

If there were any doubt about the squadron’s true intentions, 12 A-4 Skyhawks from Squadron AS-34 out of Cecil Field rendezvoused aboard *Essex* when the ships passed near Jacksonville. The squadron proceeded on to Nicaragua, where the CEF was training under the watchful eye of American advisors. As they approached the Nicaraguan coast, each destroyer sailed independently and rendezvoused with a pre-assigned CEF freighter.

Even though American forces were suppose to be incognito, Admiral Burke and Dennison still wanted to be prepared for the worst. Unknown to all in the task force, the two admirals placed several assets on stand by, including a Marine brigade landing team, two more squadrons of destroyers, and a Norfolk-based battlegroup that included USS *Independence* (CVA-62) and USS *Galveston* (CLG-2), should more firepower be authorized or if Castro decided to make a move against Americans at Guantanamo Bay.

The rules of engagement for Operation Bumpy Road, as the Joint Chiefs somewhat ironically called the Navy’s involvement in the invasion, were strict. All ships in the invasion force were to maintain strict radio silence. If the destroyers detected a ship that might interfere with the path of the freighter, they were to place themselves between the potentially hostile target and the freighter. They were only to fire on the hostile target if fired upon first. If any shot were exchanged, the operation was to be immediately called off, though the Joint Chiefs made it clear to Dennison that it was “desired to minimize the need to abort the operation.” Additionally, the destroyers were to keep their distance from the freighters during the daytime and only close at night. As the force approached Cuba, the Joint Chiefs changed the rules. They now stated that enemy forces had to show a “continual hostile posture” before American ships or planes could prepare to engage.

Veterans of the CEF later told Peter Wyden, author of the book *Bay of Pigs*:



This amateur looking map was part of the “Taylor Report,” which was a commission set up to investigate the Bay of Pigs. Each dot on the map represents a base involved the operation. The ship silhouettes are supposed to be USS *Essex* and the destroyers of Task Force Alpha. The ship silhouette on the right is suppose to be USS *San Marcos*. Notice that the map fails to point out where the landing and battle occurred. (Image provided by the John F. Kennedy Library and Archives)

*The Untold Story*, that they did not know at first that the destroyers were escorting the CEF freighters and landing craft. It was only when several soldiers were injured aboard the ship during a live-fire exercise that they noticed a destroyer pull up alongside to render aid. One veteran said he did not know the name of the ship, but always remembered its hull number: 510. The ship was USS *Eaton* (DDE-510), unfortunately more famous for her collision with the battleship *Wisconsin*, than for her many years of distinguished service. This particular veteran also remembered that at the moment he saw *Eaton*, he was quite confident that the CEF was going to be successful as he firmly believed that the

Americans were going to be direct participants.

In a way, the Task Force was directly involved, despite the wishes of President Kennedy. The Agency organized some of the CEF soldiers into underwater demolition teams (UDTs), led by CIA agent Grayston Lynch. The teams served as the CEF’s scouting force and landed ahead of the invasion to mark the landing sites. Originally USS *Threadfin* (SS-410) was to carry the teams in, but the CIA agent turned out to be claustrophobic. *Eaton* became his team’s transport.

As D-Day, which had been changed from April 5 to April 17, approached, the operation was changed again. The number

*Bay of Pigs continued on page 14*



Unfortunately best known for colliding with USS *Wisconsin* (BB-64) in the 1950s, the destroyer escort USS *Eaton* (DDE-510) had a very distinguished career. During the Bay of Pigs operation, the “Fighting Five and Dime” rescued several members of the CEF and a CIA agent while under fire from Castro’s tanks. (U.S. Navy photo)

## Book Reviews

### *Splintering the Wooden Wall: the British Blockade of the United States 1812-1815*

by Wade G. Dudley

Reviewed by Howard L. Sandefer

My usual reaction when reading anything that attempts to refute the writings of Alfred T. Mahan is to immediately raise a silver crucifix and search for a wooden stake. That said, Wade G. Dudley does make an interesting case for doubting the totality of the blockade established by the Royal Navy during the War of 1812. The blockade established at the beginning of the War of 1812 was supposed to end the war quickly, according to conventional wisdom in the United Kingdom.

The author begins by documenting the Royal Navy's expertise in applying a naval blockade against a belligerent nation. The first definitive doctrine was published in 1642, and the doctrine had been applied in all conflicts since. The difference in this war is the locale

Wade G. Dudley, *Splintering the Wooden Wall: The British Blockade of the United States 1812-1815*. Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute, 2002. 248 Pages. ISBN 1-55750-167-X. \$32.95.

of the blockade. At no time did the Royal Navy have sufficient ships to institute the kind of close blockade that allowed them to restrict the French Navy to Brest and Toulon. The UK was still at war with France, requiring large numbers for that blockade. The lack of ships was further complicated by the transit time from home bases in the UK to the blockade stations.

Logistic support in the theater of operations was lacking. Replacements for men and material came primarily from England. Limited bases existed in Halifax and Bermuda, but they were not the full service bases needed for maintenance of the blockade.

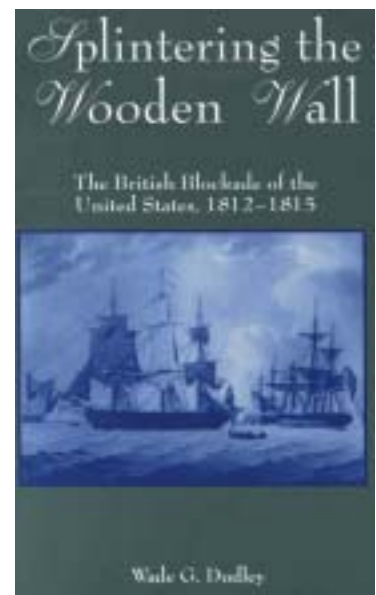
The Royal Navy was not able to establish an effective blockade of the United States coast for these reasons. The author provides a good bit of proof using shipping records showing departures and arrivals were not impacted excessively.

Blockades demand a great deal from ships and crews, and Dudley detailed the demands. An effective blockade can only be maintained by having ships constantly on station in all weathers and conditions. This is hard on both men and material, and is a very boring duty unless blockade runners or other actions occur. The problems of a sailing ship blockade are very rigorous because the ships can easily find themselves on a lee shore by a sudden change of wind. Prevailing Northeasters on the U. S. Coast took their toll on the blockaders. Other difficulties include the differing equipment available to the combatants.

Perhaps the major problem experienced was the problem of command. Both Admirals Cochrane and Cockburn were action oriented, desiring to take the fight to the enemy. Cochrane served under Rodney, and Cockburn was a protege of Nelson. The overwhelming feature of blockade service is the boredom. Action was scarce, and the self-discipline required to keep on station almost overwhelming. Men such as Cochrane and Cockburn sought more active employment, which led to a number of spectacular raids into Chesapeake Bay, burning, confiscating, and cutting out. In doing so, they misused their ships and allowed blockade runners in other ports to get to sea and to continue the commerce of the nation.


Cockburn destroyed villages that had the temerity to resist his depredations. He cut out privateers and burned trading schooners. His forces ran amok in Hampton, burning, looting, raping, and murdering for at least ten days. While Cockburn was burning contraband in Havre de Grace, Frenchtown and other small towns on Chesapeake Bay, ships were sailing from Charleston, Wilmington, and other ports on the coast. These actions did make for spectacular outcomes, but U.S. Navy ships and privateers were entering and leaving other ports to the South and the North of Chesapeake Bay almost at will. It was only in actively blockaded ports that difficulties ensued.

One of the enduring legends is that the



United States suffered the effects of a severe blockade, and only prevailed through courage and determination. Dr. Dudley's book shows that the blockade was not severe, but also shows that we as a nation do possess the courage, determination, and, some may say, the ruthlessness of the mother country. The big Yankee frigates did get to sea and did engage the Royal Navy. They embarrassed the Admiralty to the extent that an attack on Norfolk was ordered in a futile attempt to burn the frigate *Constellation*.

Some of the events of the war bordered on ludicrous. Dr. Dudley points out that American farmers provided most of the food for Wellington's armies in the Iberian Peninsula, were licensed by both governments, and were harassed and captured by American privateers. At one time, President Monroe imposed an embargo on trade that was much more restrictive than the Royal Navy blockade.

The book is a very good review of the history of the early part of this country from the naval point of view. I enjoyed the inclusion of the Revolutionary War experience and the relative efficiency of the blockades of the French wars. I was disappointed in the lack of follow-up to the teaser in the introduction of the beginnings of technologically induced change into the naval profession. Already steam was being used, and the submarine was being investigated. Over use of the phrase "Land-sea interface" to refer to the coast was irritating. Other than this, Dr. Dudley fashioned an excellent book about a most interesting time. 

## *The Rebel Raiders: The Astonishing History of the Confederacy's Secret Navy*

by James Tertius deKay

Reviewed by Ira R. Hanna

In his book, *The Rebel Raiders*, James Tertius deKay has woven the secrecy and diplomatic intrigue of the construction and deployment of the Confederate ship *Alabama* into a fascinating tale, well worth reading. Unfortunately, the title is misleading. If you are looking for the complete story of all the Confederate commerce raiders, you will be disappointed. Only 16 pages of this 257-page book are devoted to the *Florida* and the *Shenandoah*.

*Rebel Raiders* is mainly the story of how James Dunwoody Bullock, the Confederate Navy's chief agent in Europe, used the loopholes in British laws to secretly build warships in British shipyards. The author details how Bullock used the general sentiment among British aristocrats, financial, and commercial leaders, leading jurists, and

James Tertius de Kay. *The Rebel Raiders: The Astonishing History of the Confederacy's Secret Navy*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2002. 257 pages. ISBN 0-345-43182-0. \$26.00

the leaders of both leading political parties, particularly the Foreign Secretary, Lord John Russell, that it would be in Great Britain's interest if the South were successful. If America were divided, the separate nations would be more vulnerable to British influence. Very helpful to Bullock in these efforts was a shrewd and highly imaginative Liverpool solicitor named F.S. Hull who provided the Confederate agent with the legal basis to construct warships in British shipyards.

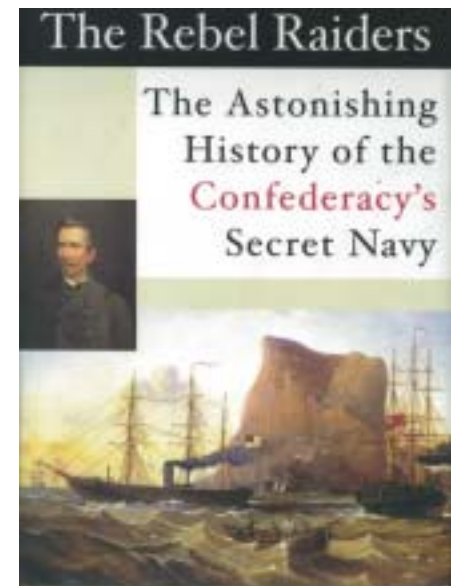
There were two laws that specifically pertained to Britain's involvement in the conflicts between foreign nations. Hull drew Bullock's attention to Section 7 of one of the laws, the Foreign Enlistment Act, which dealt with warships and made it illegal for any British subject to "sell any ship or vessel to a foreign belligerent if the said ship was to be used with the intent to cruise or commit hostilities against any foreign state with which

Britain was at peace." Since Britain was at peace with the United States, this presented a major problem to Bullock. Hull solve this problem by offering a hypothetical situation to prominent British jurists that proposed building a ship that might look like a warship but had no guns installed. This legal argument lay in the distinction Hull made in the wording of the act and it found favor with the jurists, thus allowing Bullock to proceed with the construction of his secret navy.

Once the ships were built, Bullock had the problem getting out of English water, and in supplying them with the necessary guns, fuel, and supplies. De Kay tells of Bullock's success in detail and with journalistic flair. He ends with a full description of the 1871 International Tribunal that settled the United States' claims against Great Britain for the destruction of its shipping by CSS *Alabama* and the other raiders.

Some of what is said on the inside jacket of this book is perfectly true. "With *The Rebel Raiders* naval historian James Tertius deKay brings to dazzling life an amazing, little known piece of history that is a suspenseful tale of military strategy, international espionage, and a legal crisis whose outcome still affects the world." What cannot be substantiated is that it is "an important work of Civil War scholarship."


The author admits in his very short list of sources that he "relied in large part on the personal accounts of the three main figures in the narrative." One account was by James Bullock, another by Raphael Semmes, the captain of the *Alabama*, and lastly, the diaries of Charles Francis Adams, U.S. Ambassador to the Court of St. James during the Civil War. There were no footnotes or endnotes with which to verify sources and no index that would have helped to find information. In comparison, Norman C. Delaney's *Ghost Ship: The Confederate Raider Alabama*, uses many more primary and secondary sources and tells a much more fluent story in a way that you almost feel you were there. Without



too much effort, six other primary sources can be easily found, one of which is written by J. Thomas Scharf, an officer on the *Alabama*. If one wishes to read a complete a history of the Confederate Navy, read Raimondo Luraghi's *History of the Confederate Navy*.

There were also several glaring omissions in this book. Matthew F. Maury and James North also were sent to Europe to procure ships for the Confederacy. Maury, who already was well known for his navigational expertise, was able to purchase and get to sea on the CSS *Georgia*. North, who spent most of his time in France, was a thorn in Bullock's side and caused him some political problems that took time away from his effort in England.

The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines history as "a narrative of events, a story." Modern historians seem to take this definition to extremes and many works read like novels. These same historians choose the major events that they want to emphasize and often tend to ignore the possibility that the observations of other participants might lead to a more balanced perspective of events and make them more accurate. However, readers always enjoy a book that tells a good story. *Rebel Raiders* is one of these books.

The author's previous book, *Monitor: The Story of the Legendary Civil War Ironclad and the Man Whose Invention Changed the Course of History*, was hailed by critics as "absorbing and charming" and "fascinating reading." This recent work is more of the same and should be ready with that in mind. 



# USS *Liberty* Incident Still Not Settled

Recently, the National Security Agency, under the Freedom of Information Act, released a series of intercepted messages relating to the Israeli attack on the Little Creek-based spy ship USS *Liberty* (AGTR-5). A U.S. Navy EC-121 “Super Connie” aircraft flying nearby recorded a series of conversations between two Israeli helicopters and their control tower in Israel.

The person who succeed in getting the transcripts released claimed that the *Liberty* incident is just that, an incident, and the transcripts make it an open and shut case.

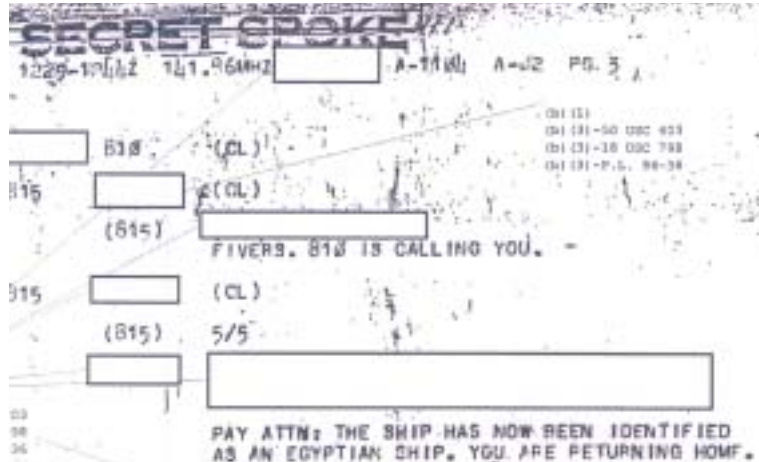


## The Museum Sage

Specifically, the Israeli pilots, according to the transcripts, do identify the ship they are attacking as an Egyptian ship. Only later, are they asked to verify the identity of the ship by looking at the flag. The mistaken identity explanation has been accepted by both U.S. and Israeli governments. Israel issued a formal apology and paid reparations.

The dispute between the two allies, however, has not died and the discussion has grown particularly vicious and disintegrated into name calling. The transcripts, unfortunately, will do nothing to settle the dispute. The only thing it answers is that two Israeli helicopter pilots, not even directly involved in the attack, had no clue what was going on.

There are still many unanswered questions that both sides, those who say it was accidental and those who say it was a deliberate attack, need to answer. Now understand that the Sage is not taking sides



At the top is one of the message intercepted by the EC-121 recently released by the NSA. On the right, is a cleaned up version of another part of the June 8, 1967 intercept. See page 13 to download the complete transcript.

in this dispute. However, the Sage does believe the discussion has gotten off track. Among the questions that should be asked are:


Why did the IDF launch the attack? In other words, what prompted the IDF to launch the attack? Someone must have spotted a potential enemy ship and called it in. What was described to their superiors? Normally, in a war these questions are pretty obvious and if it was any other ship, one wouldn't care. But this was not just any other ship.

Even if the ship was an Egyptian horse transport, as claimed, why was it attacked with such prejudice? The ship was not a battleship, or even a gun boat. It was an unarmed, unescorted supply ship capable of eight knots on a good day, yet the IDF treated the ship in question like it was a reenactment of the 1941 sortie of the German battleship *Bismarck*. The Sage has seen reports that the target in question was moving 28 knots. Where on Earth did that number come from? In the transcript, the helicopter pilot did spot on the hull of the ship “GTR-5,” but claimed he did not know what this meant. Why not? At the very least, the pilots (and many others) are guilty of gross neglect for failing basic “friendly or foe” training.

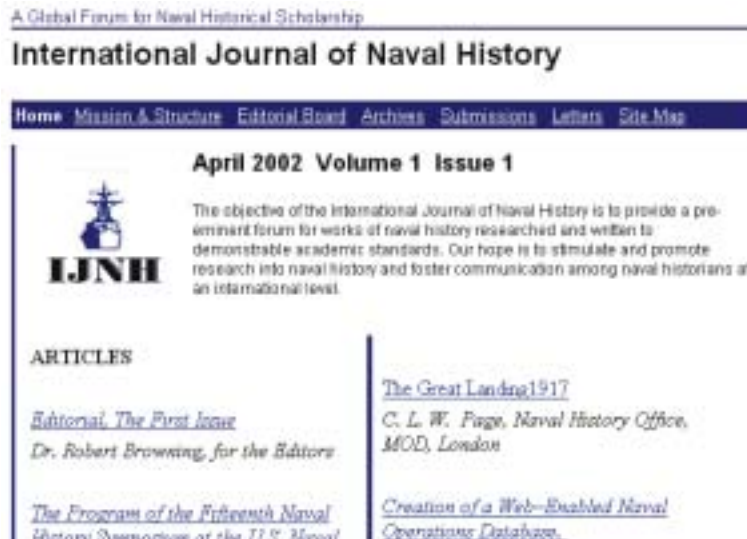
On the other side of the issue, one must ask and explain properly why the Israelis would want to attack an American ship. There have been some interesting hypotheses proposed, but none have been properly documented. Two of them are

PAY ATTENTION TO THE MASTS THERE.  
AKE 810 WITH YOU AND RETURN HOM  
(BEARING) 070 AT A RANGE 60 MILES.  
RGR, I RECIEVED. THIS IS CLEA  
RGR, THIS IS CLEAR, DID IT CLEARLY  
SIGNAL AN AMERICAN FLAG?  
THANKS, REMAIN MEANWHILE OVR THE  
REGION.  
REQUESTING THAT YOU MAKE ANOTHER  
PASS AND CHECK AGAIN WETHER IT IS  
REALLY AN AMERICAN FLAG.

based on the idea that *Liberty* intercepted sensitive Israeli message traffic and Israel didn't want the information to be released. Specifically, this hypothesis states that *Liberty* discovered an Israeli massacre of Arab POW. Another theory is that Israel wanted to conceal troop movements during the Six Day War. While both of these are plausible explanations, thus far, proof of either theory has yet to surface.

There are many other questions. The fact of the matter is that not of all of the documents on the incident have been released, and they really need to be, in order to achieve some closure for the veterans of the ship. 

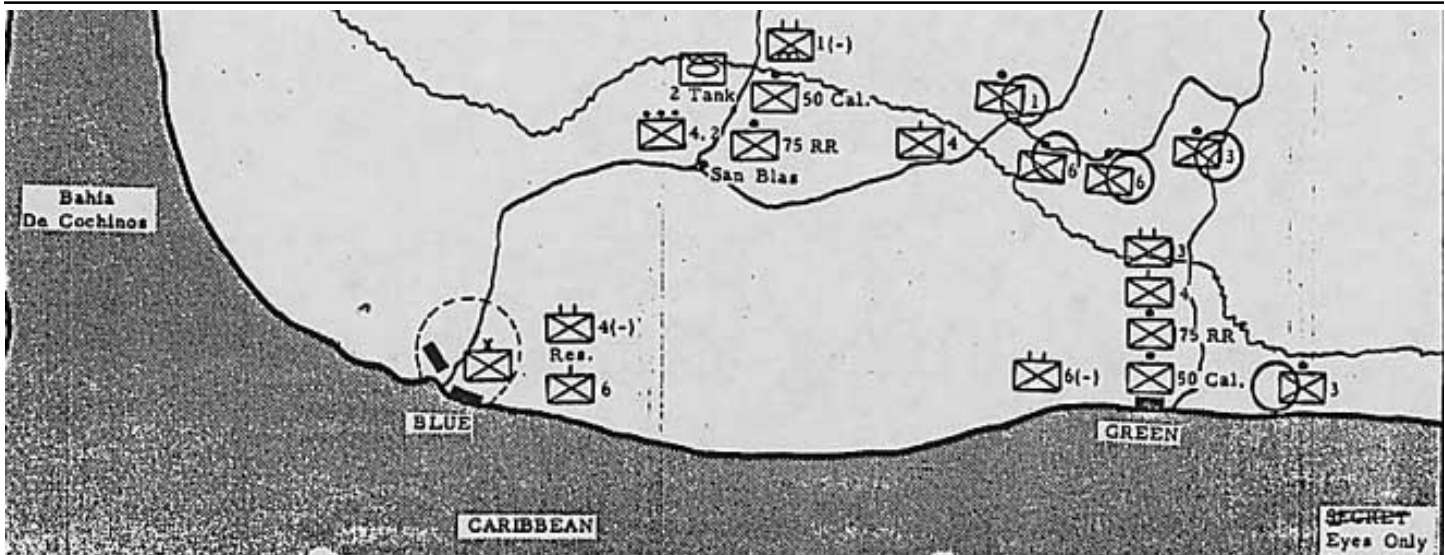
# Useful Websites



**www.ijnhonline.org**-This is the web site for the International Journal of Naval History. This is a quarterly online journal of scholarly works by naval historians from around the world. All articles and book reviews can be read at no charge.

**www.nsa.gov/docs/efoia/released/liberty.html**-The National Security Agency has recently declassified and translated new documents pertaining to the attack on the Little Creek-based spy ship USS *Liberty* (ATGR-5). The documents include intercepted radio transmissions as recorded by a nearby EC-121 and written English translations.





This was the battle plan for Operation Zapata/Pluto. The town of Giron had an airfield and was successfully seized by forces landing at Blue Beach. Red Beach was on the north shore of the Bahia de Cochinos or "Bay of Pigs" which was the first beachhead to be captured by Castro's forces. (National Archives)

### Bay of Pigs continued from page 9

of B-26 bombers assigned to the pre-invasion airstrike was cut from 14 to 8 in another move to further limit possible political repercussions. The Rules of Engagement, which had already placed major restrictions on American warships, were changed again. CINCLANT instructed the destroyers that they now could only engage if the enemy was "honing in for the kill."

The journey from Nicaragua to Cuba was uneventful. Despite the slow speed, some of the CEF ships could only make five to seven knots, all members of the invasion force, except for *Essex*, arrived at the pre-designated point about five miles off the Cuban coast late in the evening of April 16. *Essex* waited on stand-by about 125 miles off shore. The carrier's air wing was augmented by two A-1 "Spads," which flew in from *Independence*. *San Marcos* transferred the pre-loaded landing craft over to the brigade, which then pulled alongside the freighters and LCIs and made preparations to land.

Joined by USS *Murray* (DD-576), *Eaton* and two of the CEF's infantry landing craft entered Cuban waters and landed the UDTs, one for each beach, at 0100 on the morning of April 17. The freighters and other landing craft followed in behind the two destroyers. The American warships withdrew to refuel from the USS *Elokomon* (AO-55).

The invasion plan called for the CEF soldiers to land on three beaches in and around the Bay. The Agency designated each beach a different color: Blue, Red,

Green. The planned airstrike against Castro's airforce by CEF planes also went forward. The day before the invasion, the B-26s flew in from Nicaragua and attacked Cuban air bases. While some of the Communist planes were knocked out, the strike lack sufficient firepower and left many untouched. While this was going on, a CEF B-26 landed in Miami whose pilot claimed to be a defector. Unfortunately, the American press quickly saw through the ruse and realized he was really a CIA contract pilot. Alerted to the invasion, several T-33s (a two-seated version of the jet powered P-80 Shooting Star) manned by pro-Castro pilots mobilized to repel the invasion.

Two of the Little Creek LCIs, rechristened *Barbara J.* and *Blagar*, landed the first combat units followed in by the other landing craft. After refueling, *Murray* and *Eaton* stood watch just outside Cuban territorial waters with orders to only keep watch for enemy aircraft, and not to engage any enemy forces. Almost immediately upon landing, CEF units came under fire from pro-Castro militiamen. The landing at first did not go smoothly, as several of the ships hit unmarked shoals. But after a fierce firefight, the CEF battalions were able to seize a beachhead and the town of Playa Giron.

Then Castro arrived with reinforcements from the north, and events took a major turn for the worse. T-33s attacked the freighters *Rio Escondido* and *Houston* with rockets. The former blew up when one of the rockets hit ammunition lockers and the latter was

severely damaged and later sunk. The rest of the ships began a hasty retreat back towards the American destroyers. Other T-33s along with MiG-15s began to attack CEF soldiers on Blue Beach. Ground reinforcements arrived to join in the counter attack and succeeded in wiping out CEF forces on Red Beach (at the north tip of the Bay of Pigs) before turning their attention to the southeast. The captains on two of the freighters, *On Caribe* and *Atlantico*, refused to leave the protection of the American ships without proper air cover.

Twenty-four hours into the battle, the Agency made a request to the Joint Chiefs to have Task Force Alpha set up a "safe haven" for the freighters and landing craft. With Presidential approval, the Joint Chiefs informed Dennison that he could now use airpower and the destroyers to shield the freighters and landing craft, but maintained restrictions on aggressive moves against Castro's forces. Additionally, *Essex* was instructed to launch reconnaissance aircraft over the battlefield in order to provide Washington with a clearer picture of the situation.

Admiral Burke wanted to use more. He personally demanded that the President release all of Task Force Alpha from the rules of engagement and allow them to directly intervene on the CEFs behalf. Burke was confident that between *Essex's* airgroup and the destroyers' five-inch guns that they could wipe out a column of Castro's forces approaching from the north.

Kennedy is said to have asked Burke  
*Bay of Pigs continued on page 15*



*Bay of Pigs continued from page 15*

“What if Castro’s forces return the fire and hit the destroyers?”

To which the CNO is said to have replied, “Then they will knock the Hell of them. We are involved sir...Mr. President, we can not leave those boys, they will be slaughtered out there!”

The President met Burke half-way and ordered *Essex* to prepare her aircraft for ground strikes, but refused to allow the destroyers to engage. The destroyers would only be allowed to enter Cuban waters to rescue survivors. While conducting what was called a “humanitarian mission,” the destroyer crews would not wear their uniform nor carry their ID cards.

When Dennison received these orders from Washington, he modified them to better fit the situation as he interpreted it. He changed the no I.D. or uniform instruction because if any of the sailors were captured without something identifying themselves as members of the U.S. Armed Forces, they could be treated as spies and not as prisoners of war. Instead, he instructed the sailors to at least wear their dungarees. Furthermore, he ordered not only *Essex*’s air wing to make ready for air strikes, but also the air wing on board *Independence*. Fighter pilots were instructed to track Cuban aircraft and try to dissuade the Communist pilots from attacking, but they were not to engage unless fired upon. If the pilot did happen to shoot an enemy plane down, the squadron was instructed that “every means will be done to cover up that fact.”

By the time the order was issued to the fleet, the CEF was in dire straits. After 48 hours, many CEF units were under heavy bombardment from enemy airstrikes, tanks, and artillery. They attempted to counter-attack to hold their position, but they were out numbered and running out of ammunition. *Eaton* rushed into the Bay itself and sent rescue teams out in whale boats and rubber rafts to pick up survivors. The destroyer’s commanding officer was even told to ground his ship if he had to, an order he found unnecessary. Along with several of the CEF soldiers, Agent Lynch was among the survivors. Seeing *Eaton* in the Bay, several Soviet-made T-34 tanks began firing on the American destroyer. *Eaton* did not engage them and instead collected all the rescue teams and withdrew.

*“For obscure reasons, the Navy was not asked to provide the help it might have.”*

-James Kirkpatrick, Inspector General, Central Intelligence Agency, on the lack of cooperative planning for the Bay of Pigs operation

*“The military plan was a good one. It was properly worked out between the Agency and the Joint Staff and was a product of highly competent, professional military planning.”*

-Richard M. Bissell’s, Deputy Director (Plans), Central Intelligence Agency, response to Kilpatrick’s report


While on watch in *Beale*’s combat information center, Benzel said he always remembered one message that he decoded. It said, “We are surrounded, request air support immediately, repeat request air support immediately.” Many of *Beale*’s sailors rushed outside expecting American aircraft to come flying in to assist, but nothing appeared. It is possible that the message was asking for friendly B-26s to provide tactical support, as a few of them had survived interception by Castro’s T-33, and dropped several loads of napalm on approaching Communist ground forces. But even this was no longer an option, as many of the CEFs B-26s had been shot down and the remaining pilots refused to fly any more missions without escorts.

By April 20, most of the CEF had been captured or killed. The destroyers remained off the coast of Cuba for two more days conducting search and rescue missions. All sailors had to sign a document stating that they were on a training mission and not involved in combat before they left the ship, though many of their family members, Benzel’s wife among them, suspected otherwise after American news organizations found out about the disaster.

The role and use of Task Force Alpha in Zapata/Pluto was one of many issues reviewed by various internal investigations. Lyman Kirkpatrick, inspector general of the

CIA, believed that the Agency was attempting to conduct what was essentially a military operation without truly involving the military. He criticized the operation’s conceivers for treating the Navy as second-class citizens once they agreed to help. He concluded, “For obscure reasons, the Navy was not asked to provide the help it might have.”

Bissell took great exception to Kilpatrick’s report and published his own findings. He concluded that the Agency did everything correctly including cooperating with the military. Bissell wrote, “The military plan was a good one. It was properly worked out between the Agency and the Joint Staff and was a product of highly competent, professional military planning.”

When the Bay of Pigs became public, a major political outcry arose both at home and abroad against President Kennedy. The administration was criticized on both sides of the issue. One side criticized Kennedy for even thinking about invading Cuba and another group of critics claimed Kennedy sold the CEF out when he withheld American naval and air power at a critical time in the battle. Either way, Zapata/Pluto ranks as one of the pivotal moments of the Cold War and right in the middle of it were ships, officers, and sailors from Hampton Roads. 

# All American Kids

On June 14, the Museum held its 2nd Annual Flag Day contest for children ages 2-14. The kids were asked to create their own interpretation of the U.S. flag based on the Flag Act of 1777. There were three age categories. Shown here are the winners of each group as chosen by a panel staff and museum volunteers. The winners received an American flag flown on Flag Day aboard Battleship *Wisconsin*.



*Blaise G. Dewey Age 11  
Virginia Beach, VA*



*Tunisia Harris Age 8  
Richmond, VA*



*Megan Hogge Age 6  
Virginia Beach, VA*

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## In Our Next Issue...

- *The Last of the Line: USS Cumberland*
- Book Reviews: *USS Constellation: From Frigate to Sloop of War* and *AWACS and Hawkeyes: The Complete History Airborne Early Warning Aircraft*